

**Minutes of the Special Joint Meeting of the
Planning Board and Transportation Commission
Monday, August 25, 2008**

President Kohlstrand called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

2. FLAG SALUTE: Chair Knox-White

3. ROLL CALL: Planning Board: President Kohlstrand, Vice President Ezzy Ashcraft and Board members Autorino, Cunningham and Lynch were present.

Board members Cook and McNamara were absent.

Transportation Commission: Chair Knox-White, Commissioners Krueger, Lee McFarland, Moehring, and Schatmeier were present.

Commissioner Subramaniam was absent.

4. MINUTES: (None)

5. AGENDA CHANGES AND DISCUSSION:

President Kohlstrand proposed moving Staff Communications to the end of the agenda in consideration of the Transportation Commission.

7. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:

- Anyone may address the Board on a topic not on the agenda under this item by submitting a speaker's information slip, subject to the 5-minute time limit.

NONE.

8. CONSENT CALENDAR:

Consent Calendar items are considered routine and will be enacted, approved or adopted by one motion unless a request for removal for discussion or explanation is received from the Planning Board or a member of the public by submitting a speaker slip for that item.

NONE.

9. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS:

- 9-A. **Draft Transportation Element General Plan Amendment and Draft Environmental Impact Report.** A public hearing to take public comment on a Draft Environmental Impact Report and draft amendments to the City of Alameda General Plan. No final action or decision will be made at this meeting by either body.

Mr. Thomas summarized the staff report and noted that at this time, staff would record comments on the adequacy of the EIR, and the appropriateness of the Draft Transportation Element. He noted that the Transportation Commission played a critical role in producing this draft Element.

Mr. Obaid Khan, Public Works, displayed a PowerPoint presentation describing the Draft Transportation Element in detail.

President Kohlstrand suggested that the public hearing be opened, and noted that five speaker slips had been received. She suggested that the speakers' time not be limited in this matter.

The public hearing was opened.

Mr. Bill Smith noted that land use and transportation issues were closely connected. As a bicycle commuter, he supported additional bicycle capacity along Fruitvale Bridge. He believed that bicycle lanes worked well as a traffic calming measure because they narrowed the street available to cars; they also made room for bicycles. He was encouraged by the direction taken by the Draft Transportation Element.

Ms. Susan Decker, Alameda Transit Advocates, stated that she believed the analysis of the impact considering alternative modes like bicycles, pedestrians and transit were very important. She noted that some mitigation was good for public transit, such as widening roads, were not good for pedestrians and bicyclists to gain access to the buses. She inquired about the effect the current parking requirements might have on the amount of traffic generated by a project, as well as other environmental impacts. She inquired about the effect that decisions like street classifications and possible interruptions of the existing grid might have on people's access to public transit.

Mr. Richard Bangert noted that he had read Transportation Commission Chair John Knox-White's comments in the newspaper. He wished to discuss some unintended consequences on traffic flow near his home, near Calhoun and Broadway close to Otis. He noted that change to the traffic flow on Broadway between Otis and Encinal, and that there was no strong language in the new Transportation Element that could lead to it being corrected. He believed that most of the focus was on addressing problems that might arise with a new development, and that unintended consequences should be corrected. He noted that signal priority should be given to pedestrians, but that was complicated in instances where there are no signals. He believed that language requiring that a signal or stop sign be installed should be included. He expressed concern about the school-age children in the area.

Mr. Eric Scheuerman stated that he believed that Alameda's current major and minor street classifications were uncomplicated, and that the new Transportation Element was essentially redevelopment of Alameda's street system. He cited the recent reworking of Webster and Park Streets as a good example of refinement. He would like to see a study on the potential of excessive street striping, and how it affects neighborhoods. He believed that there were examples of both good and bad striping in Alameda, and added that more double yellow lines were being added to Alameda, creating a more congested, crowded and stressful environment. He believed the new Transportation Element would be a major change for Alameda, and urged the City to see the excellence of Alameda's existing hardscape street design, as well as the downsides. He urged the City to consider a policy of refinement.

Mr. Bert Libby noted that he was pleased to see the EIR statements and the livability goals in the TMP. He believed there was too little attention given to quality of life impacts and increased traffic in development issues. Major Johnson had stated that the TMP would accommodate future growth, maintain Alameda's unique character, and protect the current quality of life. He believed the TMP was missing two important sections, and that it was geared towards Alameda residents and their vehicle usage, but did not address non-Alameda traffic originating from off-island. He addressed the State and federal emission goals, and noted that Major Johnson had signed the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. He believed strongly that mitigations for future development should be solely directed at reducing traffic in order to reduce the negative environmental effects of development. He noted SB 375, which implemented AB 32, promoting smart growth development and required that new developments be located near transit corridors and centers in order to reduce vehicle miles traveled and emissions.

Ms. Ani Dimusheva expressed concern about the street classification system. She believed that Alameda had a very residential character, and was concerned that the street classification system defined some streets as more residential than others. She suggested a trial period to determine whether the solutions cause any unintended consequences elsewhere. She would like to see more transit in town. She would like to see more solutions for bike safety, and believed that every street should be a bike street. She suggested implementing "bicycle preferred lanes" on streets like Park, and would like to see less regimentation of transportation modes on streets.

Ms. Corinne Lamden expressed concern about pedestrians trying to cross two-lane roads safely, particularly when the drivers did not look for pedestrians carefully.

The public hearing was closed for Board and Commission discussion.

President Kohlstrand suggested taking comments on the plan first, followed by the environmental document.

Board member Lynch believed there were a number of overlaps because one document was technical in nature, while the other was more qualitative in nature. He did not have any arguments with the technical document. He suggested a discussion addressing the present street uses versus traditional past uses of streets, and to share that information with the public. He believed there would be a heightened sense of comfort, and did not believe the methodology of the EIR could be argued. He believed the EIR was very sound and thorough, and appreciated staff's work in that regard. He noted that the plan was very comprehensive.

President Kohlstrand noted that the Transportation Commissioners' intent was trying to draft these documents so they would be more in sync regarding the movement of vehicles, as well as recognizing the need for buses circulating in the City and the need for every street to be pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly.

Board member Lynch noted that on his street, parking was allowed right up to the intersection. He noted that children walked across the street from Lydecker Park are not visible because of that parking arrangement, and that it was a quality of life issue. He inquired whether such issues should be included in the plan.

Board member Ezzy Ashcraft commended the authors of this report, as well as the public for their comments. She noted that Alameda was growing like every other Bay Area city, and that it cannot remain frozen in time, but she did not believe the small-town character and quality of life should be sacrificed. She noted that the roads did not belong to one particular transportation mode. She had some concerns about significant decreasing levels of service at some intersections. She noted that when an accident occurred in the Tube heading out of town, traffic throughout Alameda backed up. She noted that on page 4 of the Transportation Element Update, Objective 4.1.4 addressed proactive citizen involvement, particularly maintaining a public forum such as the Transportation Commission to facilitate public involvement. She suggested creating a citizen input website so they would not have to wait for the next public meeting. She noted that more off-street bicycle parking was needed, and parking lots should be striped to allow that.

Commissioner Krueger expressed concern with page 2.0-3 of the EIR summary, regarding Impact 4.2.1, which discussed traffic delay and the level of service. It stated that there was no feasible mitigation available, thus the resulting level of significance was significant and unavoidable. He was very surprised by that statement, and that the Transportation Commission discussed using transportation systems management and transportation demand management to reduce the number of trips generated and mitigated in that way. He was surprised that was not considered as a mitigation, and would like that to be addressed in the EIR. Similarly, page 2.0-4, for Impact 4.2.5, the claim was that it was significant and unavoidable because there was no mitigation available for the intersection impacts in a cumulative sense. He did not see why Transportation Demand Management (TDM)/Transportation Systems Management (TSM) was considered, which he could understand if it concluded the mitigation was not sufficient; however, it seemed to him that it was not considered at all. He noted that pages 4.2-20 through 4.2-22 indicated mitigation measures TDM/TSM were mentioned, but the conclusion was that the impact would be significant and unavoidable. He did not see how it could be known in advance that the mitigation would fail, and that it could be potentially significant. He inquired what would happen if the traffic on Park Street were given priority, which would preserve the level of service for traffic on Park Street and using the Park Street Bridge, which he believed was the primary objective. He believed that at peak times, there would be a backup on Clement, and people would take alternate routes. He believed that would preserve the Island access, and while people may need to take alternate routes several times during the day. He noted that when the intersection was not at overflow capacity, there would still be there benefits of the Clement Extension. He believed that some of the analysis was somewhat simplistic in examining the Level of Service (LOS) for the entire intersection, rather than prioritizing one direction over another.

Commissioner Krueger noted that with respect to the intersections discussed on pages 4.2-27-4.2-30, most of the proposed mitigations discussed adjusting signal timing or changing signal actuation, in conjunction with adding lanes. He would like to see the analysis of what could be achieved with the signal timing by itself. He noted there was considerable public concern about the effect of widening roads on pedestrians, bicyclists and transit. He noted that 4.2-28 through 4.2-29 used Tilden Landing/Fernside as an example; the text pointed out that the project alternative had a reduced delay in the intersection, yet the conclusion was that it was significant. He noted that also happened on High and Fernside on page 4.2-29, and for High Street and Otis on page 4.2-29-4.2-30. He would like to see further explanation of that, so the effects of implementing the TMP to the baseline.

President Kohlstrand noted that she had the same questions, and added Island Drive and Doolittle, Park Street and Blanding, and Broadway and Tilden and Eagle. She noted that it was not clear what was analyzed, and that if the delays were less, why it was a significant impact. She believed confusion had been created over what was being analyzed, and that it changed the picture from dealing with traffic and travel in Alameda that was not solely focused on the auto, and that the project should be given its due credit.

Commissioner Krueger noted that it was important to get a quantitative number out, as well as to obtain a qualitative look as well. He would like the TDM to be taken into account.

Board member Cunningham noted that one of the fundamental issues addressing the need was based on the supply or demand for transportation within the community. Under the assumptions in the EIR, there was an assumed growth of jobs in the community from 31,000 to 49,000, which represented a 65% increase in jobs on the Island, relative to an increase in housing from 31,000 to 36,000, a 17% increase. He noted that it would be important to identify where the supply and demand would be. He anticipated that there more growth in the Alameda Point area. He believed that mitigation should address getting people from areas where the housing was concentrated to where the jobs are. He would like to see other plans within the Transportation Element such as water taxis that would mitigate people not using roads; he suggested that a water taxi from Harbor Bay to Alameda Point may be workable.

Board member Cunningham noted that he had raised the definition of LOS in the Town Centre matters, and would like to add further clarification. He noted that a delay over 60 seconds at Santa Clara would be a LOS level "F", and intersections such as Constitution and Atlantic at 53 seconds would qualify for LOS level "E". Board member Cunningham believed that study should be done before adoption of the plan. He inquired whether alternate LOSs would be considered based on the classification of the route. Mr. Thomas replied that would be a possibility, and noted that in Oakland, they had changed the threshold of what was significant. Board member Cunningham inquired whether a safety factor was linked into the LOS, and noted that most of what they had seen was based on timing.

President Kohlstrand noted that it was based on average seconds of delay.

Commissioner Krueger wished to clarify that he did not want two different definitions of LOS, and that they should stick to the standard definitions. He added that the City should determine what they were willing to accept on certain circumstances, given the standards. He inquired whether it would be possible to analyze the levels of service of two different legs of an intersection, or whether CEQA required treating the whole intersection as one.

Staff stated that information about each leg of the intersection could be provided.

President Kohlstrand added that information was included in the tables in the background information.

Commissioner McFarland had no comment.

Commissioner Lee had no comment.

Commissioner Moehring thanked the public for their comments. She wanted to concentrate on safety issues. She noted that safety in crossing intersections was a major issue, and recommended that drivers use both hand and directional signals when driving. She appreciated the comment on the ability to correct things that did not work as well as anticipated. She agreed with the concept of starting simply and moving forward in smaller steps. She would like to see a little more traffic on Webster Street to patronize the businesses, and did not want the alternate routes to be so fast that they completely avoid Webster Street.

Chair Knox-White noted that he did not have a comment on the plan itself, and that while page 4.2-2 of the EIR discussed a light rail corridor, the TMP did not mention a light rail corridor. The TMP did mention an exclusive transit street. He believed that bike parking could be highlighted, and noted that the design factor of the retail streets should receive more focus. He noted that the Pedestrian Plan had been approved by the Planning Board. He complimented Mr. Bergmann on the effectiveness of public transit surveys. He agreed with Commissioner Moehring regarding the street classification, and added that a random survey to up to 2,000 homes had been mailed as an insert in AP&T bills. As a result of that survey, people believed that all streets should be used equitably, but there should also be streets that would take people across the Island. He noted that the City tried its best to balance those needs. He noted that the EIR mentioned that there would be less than significant impact on air quality (4.3-8). Commissioner Knox-White noted that with respect to levels of service at intersections, he would like to take the long view and be sure that pedestrian and bicycle levels of service were addressed. With respect to the EIR, he noted that it was odd that there were two or three intersections that were found to be significant and unavoidable in the document that had already been declared significant and unavoidable for the traffic generated. He noted that the Alameda Landing EIR stated the traffic was significant and unavoidable, and he believed that every following project was identified as the source of the traffic being significant and unavoidable. He believed that it should be stipulated that it was significant and unavoidable, and that it may not make it worse, or may make it better. Commissioner Knox-White expressed frustration that proposed mitigations were identified, but that the effects of those mitigations were not examined, positive or negative.

Chair Knox White added that the City Council has already accepted the idea of reducing trips instead of accommodating them, but that the EIR did not address that option at all. He believed that while flexibility was good, cities should be able to identify their priorities. He noted that Mariner Square Drive was listed as a four-lane road, even though it was supposed to be reduced when it came to the Transportation Commission. He cautioned against the unintended consequences of mitigation. He expressed concern about the ability of residents on Fernside to get out of their driveways because the platoon of cars released from traffic lights travel down the street at intervals that do not break. He suggested that the City become more aware of those types of consequences. He would like the FEIR to discuss the length of the LOS-D at intersections.

Chair Knox White noted that Eighth Street has more traffic under the Project than under the No Project use of Eighth Street, even though the project was meant to decrease its use. Under the Environmentally Superior Alternative, he suggested removing EIR policies 1, 2 and 6. He would like further clarification of the purpose of 500 pages of turn diagrams, which he believed puts off the average citizen. He added that there was a lot of technical data that would have been useful but was not included in the document. Chair Knox White echoed Board member Cunningham's comment regarding the price of gas, and believed the City was moving in the right direction regarding a mode shift; he added that the City would have the appropriate infrastructure and the accompanying planning process in place for the time when that shift occurs.

Commissioner Krueger requested that the technical appendices be separated into another document. He emphasized that it should be available, but believed that it would be more convenient and less intimidating for the residents if it were contained in a separate document.

President Kohlstrand believed that the direction of the Transportation Element was very positive, and that it tried to reflect the values of the residents of Alameda. She did not believe Alameda wanted to have seven-lane intersections such as those found in Pleasanton or Livermore, and did not believe they enhanced the pedestrian atmosphere of those cities. She believed that everyone was a potential pedestrian, and that they should be respected. She believed the essence of the plan did not appear in the document, such as the goal of restricting the future amount of roadway capacity. President Kohlstrand believed the thresholds of significance will be very critical, and that the City was in the awkward position of analyzing the Transportation Element using old significance criteria. She believed it was a goal worth pursuing, and that there was public support for changing the focus of transportation within the City. She believed the design standards for the streets and pedestrian improvements were also critical. She believed it was very important for the public to have an opportunity to provide input into that process. She believed it was important for runoff and drainage to be improved, and for them to be more friendly to people who live and work in those areas.

Board member Ezzy-Ashcraft noted that she had supported green landscaping ordinances to accompany the green building ordinances. She noted that staff had stated that the time was not yet right for that, and that the positive aspect was that the Board would be able to work with Planning staff to incorporate these recommendations into a future green landscaping ordinance to meet legal requirements. She added that it was more economical as well.

President Kohlstrand emphasized that Planning and Public Works must work together on this issue, and that the standards should respect both safety issues and improving upon current standards. Regarding the environmental document, she was surprised to find that no intersections in Alameda Point were listed as problematic.

Commissioner Krueger wished to discuss Section 6 with the No Project Alternative and the Environmentally Superior Alternatives, which were meant to distinguish them from the proposed TMP. He could not see any evidence that the phenomenon of induced traffic was taken into effect. He added that occurred when capacity was added in an attempt to mitigate congestion, an increase in traffic may also be caused because of new trips or shifted modes. He believed the impacts in 4.1.1, which stated that road widening can divide communities, and 4.2.2, Alternative Transportation, which documented negative outcomes of a mode shift, should be verified. He added that 4.1.2 should be checked as well, regarding land use and the increase of auto-oriented land use. He noted that 4.2.3 (page 6.0-10) should be checked with respect to safety, and that widening roads would allow for more free-flowing traffic, and that the speed limits may be compromised. He requested that 4.3.2-5 regarding air quality be checked, as well as 4.4.2 and 4.4.3, regarding increasing noise impacts and induced traffic. He believed that some of the analysis was too simplistic, allowing people to believe that road widening was environmentally superior. He believed there was considerable evidence to suggest that was not the case.

President Kohlstrand noted that a one-page summary of proposed thresholds of significance had been distributed. She recalled an experiment in New York City where several streets were closed to all traffic on a Saturday morning, and noted that would be tested in San Francisco by early September.

Chair Knox White discussed the summary, and explained the issue of multiple levels of service and their impacts on all modes of transportation. He noted that solutions to the impacts must be prioritized, and added that the Transportation Commission will continue to have conversations about those issues.

6. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS:

6-A. Future Agendas

Staff presented a report on upcoming agenda items.

6-B. Zoning Administrator Report — Meeting of August 19, 2008

Staff presented a report on the Zoning Administrator meeting of August 19, 2008. Two use permits were granted. One for 1712 Everett Avenue and one for 473-475 Central Avenue.

10. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS:

10-A Transmittal of August 2008 Public Review Draft of the Gateway District Strategic Plan for consideration at the September 8, 2008 Planning Board regularly scheduled Meeting.

11. BOARD COMMUNICATIONS:

Board members may ask a question for clarification, make a brief announcement or make a brief report on his or her activities. In addition, the Board may provide a referral to staff or other resources for factual information, request staff to report back to the body at a subsequent meeting concerning a City matter or, through the chair, direct staff to place a request to agendaize a matter of business on a future agenda.

Board member Lynch requested staff look into options that limit skateboarding in front of the theatre as it can be hazardous to pedestrians.

Vice President Ezzy Ashcraft suggested signage stating “No skateboarding on sidewalk” be placed near the theatre to address Board member Lynch’s concern. She asked staff to provide clarification to the Board on the public misconceptions regarding the Board’s action on the Grand Marina housing project.

12. ADJOURNMENT: 10:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Thomas, Secretary
City Planning Board

This meeting was audio and video taped.